

Message Text

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12

ACTION AID-31

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 IO-14 ISO-00 AGR-20 INT-08 INR-10 PC-10

USIA-15 DODE-00 COME-00 DRC-01 RSC-01 /121 W

----- 110400

R 121633Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6365

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION USUN NY

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AFDROUGHT

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, DM

SUBJ: WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT OSRO?

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DAKAR FOR SNYDER

REF COTONOU 1114

1. EMBASSY COMMENTS ON SAHELIAN LOGISTICS MEETING HELD COTONOU JULY 8-9 FOLLOW. FOR SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS OF MEETING, SEE REF.

2. WOULD APPEAR, BASED ON OUR DETAILED KNOWLEDGE OF NIGER LOGISTICS SITUATION, THAT LITTLE NEW IN WAY OF COMMITMENT OR KNOWLEDGE CAME OUT OF CONFERENCE. ON ALMOST ALL QUESTIONS, DONR REPS AGREED ONLY TO REFER REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS TO THEIR HEADQUARTERS OR TO FURTHER EXAMINATION OF PROBLEM. ONE OF FEW CONCRETE PROPOSALS WAS FORMATION PORT COMMITTEE. HOWEVER, DRAFTER OF CONCLUSIONS FORGOT THAT NIGERIA AND ABIDJAN HAVE FUNCTIONING COMMITTEES. SEEMED TO MOST OF THOSE WITH WHOM I DISCUSSED MATTER THAT BULK OF INFO DISSEMINATED AT MEETING COULD HAVE BEEN CONVEYED BY TELEX AND FEW DECISIONS TAKEN COULD HAVE BEEN MADE BY LOCAL REPS OR AT EARLIER ROME MEETING. THUS, ONE WONDERS WHY MEETING WAS HELD. PERHAPS AUTHORS OF MEETING HAD IN MIND INTANGIBLE BENEFITS OF DEMONSTRATING CONCERN OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO RECIPIENT AND TRANSITING COASTAL COUNTRIES. MEETING DID FOCUS ATTENTION ON IMPORTANT, ALBEIT WELL KNOWN OR OBVIOUS, LOGISTICS PROBLEMS. FURTHER, IT DID SUCCEED IN PUTTING SOME PRESSURE ON FORWARDING AGENTS, PORT AND RAILWAY OFFICIALS. HOWEVER, CUSTOMARY RELUCTANCE TO OPEN CRITICISM AND POSSIBLE CONFLICT BY INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS LIMITED EFFECT OF LATTER.

3. JUDGING FROM OPTIC OF ONE DEEPLY ENGAGED IN PROBLEM BUT RESIDENT IN AFRICA, COTONOU MEETING DID HAVE SOME BENEFICIAL EFFECTS. BUT, IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL THESE WOULD STAND UP TO AN UNBIASED COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS. THE COST IN MONEY AND WORK INTERRUPTION OF SOME 40-50 KEY MANAGERS FROM THREE CONTINENTS SEEMS HARDLY JUSTIFIED BY THE CONFERENCE'S RESULTS. WHILE A SERIES OF SUCH INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS LENDS GLAMOR AND DRAMA TO THE LIVES OF PARTICIPANTS, IS THIS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF MOVEMENTS OF FOOD STUFFS TO THE SAHELIAN DROUGHT VICTIMS? I THINK NOT*

4. PRESUMABLY, THE MAJOR OBJECTIVES OF THE SERIES OF CONFERENCES WHICH BEGAN IN ROME SHOULD HAVE BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO IMPROVE COORDINATION OF THE LOGISTICS OPERATIONS AND TO SORT OUT BOTTLENECKS. I BELIEVE A FAR MORE EFFICACIOUS WAY OF MEETING THESE OBJECTIVES WOULD BE TO MOVE OSRO FROM ITS COMPARATIVE ISOLATION IN ROME TO A SITE IN AFRICA. HEADQUARTERED CLOSER TO THE PROBLEM, OSRO SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED WITH MORE PROFESSIONAL SATFF AND ADEQUATE COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES. THE ONLY ARGUMENT WHICH I HAVE HEARD FOR OSRO REMAINING IN ITALY IS THAT IT IS SITUATED CLOSE TO DONORS. THIS SURELY HAS LITTLE VALIDITY.

ITALY IS ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE LITTLE TO SAHELIAN RELIEF. PROX-
IMITY TO FAO HEADQUARTERS ALSO SEEMS OF MARGINAL UTILITY. IT
IS ALMOST AS EASY TO REACH DONOR CAPITALS FROM A CENTRAL SITE
IN WEST AFRICA AS IT IS FROM ROME. IN FACT, TOO CLOSE INVOLVE-
MENT IN THE BYZANTINE FAO BUREAUCRACY MAY ITSELF BE INHIBITING.
IN TERMS OF EASE OF COMMUNICATION WITH DONOR AND RECIPIENTS,
A CITY LIKE ABIDJAN HAS FAR GREATER ADVANTAGES WITH FEW OF THE
DISADVANTAGES OF ROME. SITING OF OSRO IN AFRICA, WITH ITS OWN
INDEPENDENT COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK, WOULD CERTAINLY ENHANCE
VISUAL EVIDENCE OF SOLIDARITY WITH DROUGHT VICTIMS, AND MAKE
COORDINATION OF LOGISTICS SYSTEM INFINITELY EASIER. IF REQUIRED,
DONOR REPS COULD BE DETAINED TO ORSRO IN ABIDJAN. MOST DONORS
ALREADY HAVE SUBSTANTIAL DIPLOMATIC AND/OR ASSISTANCE ESTABLISH-
MENTS RESIDENT IN THE CITY. THIS IS NOT TO SAY ABIDJAN IS ONLY
POSSIBILITY. OTHER AFRICAN CITIES MIGHT ALSO BE CONSIDERED.
SINCE IT APPEARS THE NEED FOR LARGE-SCALE FOOD IMPORTS WILL NOT
DISAPPEAR QUICKLY, WE SHOULD BEGIN TO ORGANIZE FOR A LONGER,
LESS CRISIS-ORIENTED OPERATION RATHER THAN RELYING ON
PRESENT MAKE-SHIFT SOLUTIONS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISASTER RELIEF, AFDROUGHT, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974COTONO01116
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740188-0149
From: COTONOU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740754/aaaabunh.tel
Line Count: 135
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AID
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: COTONOU 1114
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 APR 2002 by kellew0>; APPROVED <20 JUN 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT OSRO? LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
TAGS: EAID, DM, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005